



INTERAGENCY CONNECTION

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Strategic Connections resulting in Unique Solutions

Chair's Corner



Spring has sprung (as the saying goes)! Our Federal Executive Board (FEB) is springing into action. Our 2018 **Leadership FEB class** will begin later this month with a visit to NOAA agencies located in Galveston. This year is the most exciting schedule so far. I want to thank agencies and leaders who have made the commitment to this prestigious program, as well as pass on my appreciation to the many agencies who will host our group throughout the year! I am interested in meeting all the class members when we have the opportunity to brief our agency mission in May. This year's class will visit some of our federal agencies that have not been in past years rotations and I'm excited to add the additional agency tours!

Due to the increasing dangers created by Distracted Drivers, our FEB has coordinated a half-day train-the-trainer class entitled "**Our Driving Concern**" at no cost to the participants. The expectation is that in return for the no-cost training, those who attend will return to their agency and provide the training for all employees; thus multiplying the positive impact of this resource. A registration is provided on page 9 of this newsletter for your convenience.

In May, our FEB will host an All FEB Agency

meeting (Full Board meeting) to discuss **Medical Countermeasures** and adding details to our current "Alpha POD" plan. We hope to multiply the locations we can utilize within the federal community for Points of Dispensing (PODs) in an effort to distribute medications more quickly to the federal workforce and their family members. Through this effort, we expect to reduce the impact on the federal community and build in "social distancing" to keep our employees and family members out of open public lines. A registration is provided in this newsletter, if you haven't yet signed up!

We are "gearing up" for our annual **Awards Ceremony** scheduled for Thursday, May 10th. This is one of our largest and most festive events of the year and I hope everyone plans to attend! If you have not nominated employees in the past, I encourage you to attend this event so you can see how we honor the efforts of those nominated. I imagine it will have you nominating employees in the future! A registration is included in this newsletter for your convenience.

I hope to see you at our numerous activities!

Tim Jeffcoat, Chair

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The Goldilocks Effect on Perceptions of Performance Rating Fairness

Does a rating that is too low, too high, or just right affect employees' overall view of the workplace?

Like it or not, the performance appraisal is part of every Federal employee's work life. The decisions resulting from such appraisals are directly tied to performance awards, merit pay, and quality step increases, as well as to performance-based adverse actions and service credit during a reduction in force. Studies have shown that employee satisfaction with the appraisal process and ratings influences a variety of employee viewpoints, including commitment to the organization, job satisfaction, intent to leave, and job performance. The results of MSPB's 2016 Merit Principles Survey (MPS) indicates that this may not be good news for the Federal Government.

Over 20% of MPS respondents reported that their performance appraisal is not a fair reflection of their performance. These results are consistent with those of our 2011 Federal Merit Systems Survey in which 21% of employees

believed that supervisors demonstrated favoritism in performance appraisals. Perceptions of fairness are essential to the success of the performance appraisal system. With more than one in every five Federal employees believing that the appraisal process is not a fair reflection of their performance, one might question how effective the process is.

Although there are many facets to appraisal fairness, one is the question of whether employees received the rating they felt they deserved. In other words, did they think their rating was too low, too high, or just right? To help analyze the effect of this perceived fairness, we asked MPS respondents to tell us the last performance appraisal rating they received, as well as the rating they thought they should have received. From this data, we identified groups of employees who believed they were underrated, correctly rated, and overrated. We then compared the three groups' attitudes regarding different measures of workplace health.

It is not unreasonable to assume that an employee who is unhappy about the fairness of the rating is unhappy about other things in the organization. Therefore, we were not surprised to find that employees who felt they were underrated also reported being less engaged, more emotionally exhausted, and generally less satisfied with select work outcomes than the correctly rated group.

What was surprising was that the attitudes of the

employees who felt they received a higher rating than they deserved were closer to those of the underrated group than they were to the employees who felt they were correctly rated, as shown in the graph.

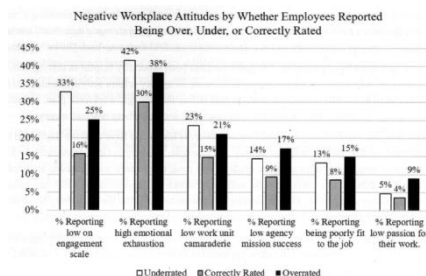
Intuitively, one might assume that an employee with a higher rating than they expected to get would be happy about the rating, which might then positively affect their view of other workplace practices. However, we found that overrated employees, like underrated employees, reported feeling more negatively about the workplace than those who felt they were correctly rated.

Overrated and underrated employees were more likely to report negative workplace attitudes about engagement, emotional exhaustion, perceptions of workplace harmony, work unit productivity, and job fit. In fact, the data show that when employees believe that the performance rating

is an unfair reflection of their true performance, whether it is too high or too low, they are often twice as likely to harbor negative workplace sentiments as those who perceive their rating to be a fair reflection of their performance.

So, what does this data mean from a workforce management perspective? It may mean that supervisors can't buy happiness with good performance appraisals. Leaders should not expect that high performance ratings will make the workforce happier and more satisfied with other aspects of their work environment. There are no shortcuts to the hard work of improving employee morale and organizational culture. Agency managers and supervisors need to stick to the basics when it comes to improving the work environment.

A good place to start may be the performance management process. It won't solve all organizational problems, but improving the process could help build trust between employees and supervisors. To do this, supervisors should establish a transparent, rigorous performance management process that includes precisely specifying performance criteria, training raters to be accurate, involving employees in performance goal setting, and holding meaningful performance discussions throughout the year. Perceptions of fairness in the performance appraisal process have been demonstrated to be very important, and getting it "just right" will take determined effort.



Why You Should Stop Interrupting People and Become a Generative Listener

There is a kind of non-listening that goes on in our society and organizations that is distracted and disjointed, and often marked by interruptions. This non-listening doesn't focus on the person speaking. Rather, the listeners try their hardest to get their ideas into the conversation.

If you've experienced this, you know how frustrating this can be both for someone trying to be heard, as well as for the listener trying to stay focused. Many of us don't know how to listen, or don't care.

This disjointed listening doesn't work well for completely understanding and

being present to the person who is speaking. It cuts off creativity and hijacks people's brains with their frustration at not feeling heard. I've heard leaders state that their employees aren't creative when in reality, they simply haven't been fully listened to.

Generating new ideas calls for a level of listening that forgoes frustration, and it is completely possible to achieve it with discipline and practice. Let's call this "generative listening" (a term coined by Nancy Kline in her book, *More Time to Think*).

Generative listening can open up latent creativity. It isn't easy, and it requires you to:

Slow down. The hyper speed of our organizations makes slowing down difficult, but not impossible. Be intentional about creating the space needed to slow the conversation down. Consider the surroundings you might need for a listening environment: as best you can, eliminate disruptions (including the electronic kind – phones, computers, as well as the human kind). Create a safe space without barriers when you can, even when you are listening virtually.

Forego interrupting. The impulse to interrupt,

especially when you disagree with the speaker, is strong and real. Consider yourself a partner in the conversation, and realize that your time will come to get your thoughts out there. If you are slowing down, this makes the waiting for your turn easier. And when it's your turn to speak, don't hog the limelight. Make sure everyone has their turn and that your time on the stage is limited.



Have genuine interest. Cultivate genuine interest in the speaker through curiosity and fascination with what they have to say. Be open to being pleasantly surprised at their brilliance, and when your turn comes, ask

open-ended questions that will help them to clarify their thoughts and help you to understand them more thoroughly.

Be still and allow silence. This listening practice also requires stillness, a settling within yourself so that you can be fully present and available to the person who is speaking. The amazing thing about stillness and silence is that they work together to help us be fully present and ready to ask those open-ended questions that will provide clarity.

Generative listening is important, if for no other reason than you and your team deserve it. It also has the added advantage of generating respect for each other's ideas. Be watching for times to listen deeply. You may find yourself and your team brimming with newfound creativity.

Mary Jo Asmus is an executive coach and a recovering corporate executive who has spent the past 12 years as president of Aspire Collaborative Services, an executive consulting firm.

<http://www.govexec.com/excellence/promising-practices/2018/01/why-you-should-stop-interrupting-people-and-become-generative-listener/145186/>

Leading through Disappointment

If promotion or advancement didn't work out for you, the practical lessons in this post are for you.

I invite leaders who I admire to share real world leadership principles they have learned on their journey.

The insights that follow are born in Kerry Eaton's experience. Kerry is Chief Operating Officer of [Health Quest Systems, Inc](#) in LaGrangeville, NY.

I thought I was in line to be the CEO.

I didn't get the promotion.

I tried to convince myself that it didn't matter that much. Turns out I was lying to myself (and everyone who asked). It was an awkward, embarrassing and painful time.

During that period, I stumbled upon a quote by Mizuta Masahilde,

"Since my house burned down I now have a better view of the rising moon."

When I read that quote I immediately knew the work I had to do. I needed to pivot and take on a fresh view. I hadn't realized there was a rising moon because I was fixated on the house that had burned down.

Three leadership lessons:

#1. *It's OK to spend some time looking at the burned down house.* There is learning there.

I'd been leaving my career to others. Looking at the burned down house helped me know that.

#2. *Spending too much time staring at the burned down house is not useful.* Once the pain has been acknowledged and the lessons are extracted, continuing to focus on the past just fans the flames that burnt the place down.

I'm pretty sure I waited too long to move on.

#3. *Failure opens up new options that can be invisible when one is on a particular*

path. If you don't look up from the ashes, you may miss the rising moon.

I have twice ended up in very fulfilling roles that were not in my line of sight until my house burned down.

I am honestly grateful for the infernos!



Important note!

This isn't just about career disappointments. The lesson applies to all the leadership issues we face. Don't wait for the 5-alarm fire to look for the rising moon. Scan the horizon early.

Learn to look for options instead of being forced to see them.

<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2017/11/19/secret-sauce-leading-through-disappointment/>

How to Build Credibility as a Manager

Building credibility is much like your fitness program—focus on the right activities at the right time and with the right frequency, and you grow stronger, faster, and more resilient.



Here are 16 behaviors to help build credibility as a manager:

1. Respect is never optional. Dispense it in every encounter.
2. Operate with a strong foundation that includes a clear role definition and even clearer leadership values.
3. Show your coworkers you care about them as individuals.
4. Dispense all glory to them.
5. Listen more than you talk.
6. When you talk, provide context for the work.
7. When you talk, say what you mean and mean what you say.
8. Most talk should be in the form

of questions, not orders.

9. Vow to never micro-manage.

10. See the prior point—commitment is commitment.

11. Set clear expectations and constantly reinforce accountability.

12. See the prior point—accountability starts with you.

13. Provide timely feedback on performance and behavior.

14. Use feed-forward to coach for the future.

15. See the point on respect. Supporting a person's professional development is a high form of showing your respect.

16. When you make a mistake, first admit it and then fix it.

The bottom line: There's no such thing as too much credibility. Keep working at it.

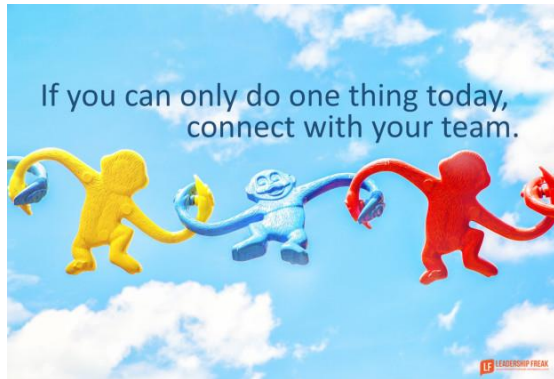
Art Petty is a coach and consultant working with executives and management teams to unlock business and human potential. He writes the Leadership Caffeine blog.

<http://www.govexec.com/excellence/promising-practices/2018/01/how-build-credibility-manager/145188/>

ONE THING YOU MUST DO TODAY AND EVERY DAY

If you can only do one thing today,
connect with your team.

Performance requires connection.



7 reasons for weak connection:

1. You don't like them.
2. Bad memories create distance. You let someone down so you avoid them. They let you down so you rule them out. You had a tough conversation that makes connection feel strained.
3. You need to know-all and solve-all. Fear that you won't be able to meet every need, solve every problem, or answer every question prevents connections. *If you get too close, they'll see your weaknesses.*
4. You can't say no. The prerequisite to opening your heart is the ability to say no.
5. Frantic schedules and conflicting agendas.
6. Power and authority give permission to stand aloof.
7. They're self-centered soul-sucking back-stabbers.

Avoidance establishes distance.

7 principles of avoidance:

Avoidance accounts for weak teams,
negative environments, and lousy results.

1. You get what you avoid. If you avoid problems, you get problems. If you reject connection, you build silos. If you hide your heart, your team becomes passionless.
2. Avoidance sets the height of the bar. *Every issue you sidestep becomes your future standard of attainment.*
3. Tolerance is passive avoidance.
4. Blameshifting is protective avoidance.
5. Silence is permission. The things you don't bring up continue.
6. Avoidance empowers destructive energy.
7. A blind eye is space for negative stories.

Connection defeats avoidance.

Commonality:

Commonality bridges distance.

I met a man from Maine before a recent presentation. I'm a Maineiac too. We raved about Maine lobster. I've forgotten most of the names I learned in Baltimore, but not Joe from Maine.

Stories reveal commonality.

Every leader needs to know the formative stories for everyone on their team.

Connection begins when you say, "I know what you mean."

Shared experiences, goals, purpose, vulnerability, strengths, or values are ground for connection.

<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2018/01/23/one-thing-you-must-do-today-and-every-day/>

HOW TO SHOW UP LIKE A LEADER TODAY

Some leaders work too hard while the people around them don't work hard enough.

You'll burn out if you're always the first person to arrive and the last person to leave.

Leaders create environments.

You had a hand in creating the environment you work in.

Leaders have a hand in the way people:

1. Respond to problems.
2. Relate to each other.
3. Pursue excellence.
4. Deliver results.

The more authority you have, the more power you have to create environments.

Principle:
The best leaders show up to bring out the best in others.

Get your head out of the weeds and focus on people.

Create environments where people thrive.

#1. Show up to help others get things done.

Successful leaders *think first* about helping others get things done. Overworked leaders think first about getting things done.

You're on the wrong track if your day begins with results, not people. Inept leaders put their heads down and deliver results.

The leader's job is people.

The answer is "who", not "what". Begin your day asking, "How might I enable, engage, and empower others?"

Leaders get lost in the weeds when they focus on their own work instead of the work of others.

#2. Show up to run great meetings.

You know the meeting will suck if the room is quiet at the beginning.

Great meetings begin with laughter, banter, and storytelling.

The most important question leaders *neglect* is, "How do I want people to feel in the meeting?"

Impersonal
efficient

meetings suck the life out of everyone around the table. They're dry, dull, predictable, and lifeless.

Great meetings are about the people at the table, not just the projects or problems on the agenda.

Take a few minutes at the beginning of meetings to connect, honor, and energize participants.

Great teams care about each other.

<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2017/11/20/how-to-show-up-like-a-leader-today/>





HOUSTON FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD AWARD CEREMONY

Date:	Thursday, May 10, 2018
Location:	United Way Center, 50 Waugh Drive, Houston
Time:	1:30 p.m.
Cost:	No fee (light refreshments will be provided)
Who should attend:	Federal Agency Leaders (or designee) and nominees



Celebrated the first week of May since 1985, Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW) is organized annually by the [Public Employees Roundtable \(PER\)](#) and its member organizations to honor the men and women who serve our nation as federal, state, county and local government employees.

Throughout the country, mayors, governors, agency leaders, communities and public service organizations participate in PSRW by issuing proclamations; hosting award ceremonies and special tribute events; and delivering messages about the value of public service. All government leaders and public servants from all backgrounds are encouraged to participate by showing appreciation to their employees and colleagues and by sharing stories of excellence in public service.

As part of this effort, the Houston Federal Executive Board is hosting an Awards Ceremony to honor accomplishments of federal employees in the Houston area. We invite you to join us in celebrating those in Public Service during this special event!

Please RSVP no later than April 20, 2018

REGISTRATION

Name:	Phone:
Agency:	City:
Email:	

Email registration to:	Gerald.Poole@gsa.gov
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Cancellation Policy: If you are unable to attend, substitute attendees are authorized and encouraged if within the appropriate management structure!



Our Driving Concern Train-the Trainer



Date:	Wednesday, April 17, 2018
Time:	8:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m.
Location:	8701 S. Gessner, 12 th Floor conference room, Houston
Why?	Traffic crashes exact a heavy toll on their victims and on businesses. According to the National Safety Council, vehicle collisions are the top cause of work-related death in Texas. Injuries result in costly lost-time workers' compensation claims, and fatalities leave businesses exposed to liability and the possibility of paying multi-million dollar settlements.
Topics:	Our Driving Concern provides your managers, HR professionals and safety instructors with the resources you need to address distracted driving, drowsy driving, aggressive driving, passenger restraint, impaired driving, and other traffic safety topics in your workplace. Our Driving Concern also offers tools and resources to help you build a company-wide traffic safety program.
Who Should Attend?	Managers, HR professionals and safety professionals and/or instructors who are willing to return to your agency and teach the "Our Driving Concern" Curriculum, in-house, multiplying the effort and benefit!
Cost:	Thanks to a grant from TxDOT, this 4-hour course is provided free of charge

For CEU credit, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/CEUcreditarlington>

In Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes, the Highway Safety Office says the real tragedy is crashes are largely preventable. Recognizing the opportunity that employers have to save lives, a growing number of employers have established traffic safety programs in their companies. No organization can afford to ignore a major problem that has such a serious impact on both their personnel and the agency budget.

Registration

Name _____ Agency _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Position Title: _____

Mail registration to:	Federal Executive Board 2320 La Branch Street, Rm 1107 Houston, TX 77004
Email to:	Gerald.Poole@gsa.gov

Cancellation Policy: Understanding that unforeseen circumstances may preclude an individual from attending, cancellations will be permitted through April 10, 2018. Since this is a "no-cost" training, we ask your courtesy to cancel early so that we can accommodate people on the waiting list, if one exists.



Leadership FEB's 2018 schedule; however, some changes may occur:

Date	Agency	
April 24, 2018	NOAA, National Weather Service NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service NOAA Flower Garden Banks Marine Sanctuary	1353 FM 646, Dickinson 4700 Avenue U
May 17, 2018	Small Business Administration Department of Labor, Wage & Hour Department of Labor, OSHA Joan Figueroa Department of State, Foreign Missions	Alliance Building 8701 S. Gessner
June 12, 2018	Federal Detention Center (am) TIGTA (pm)	1200 Texas Ave 1919 Smith Street
July 12, 2018	NASA (all day)	NASA
August 15, 2018	Presidential Library & NARA USDA Agriculture Research Service	College Station
September 20, 2018	Transportation Security Administration (am) Federal Bureau of Investigation (pm)	3838 N. Sam Houston Pkwy E
October 16, 2018	Diplomatic Security Service (am) Federal Protective Service (pm)	1919 Smith St. La Branch Building
November 7, 2018	Social Security Administration (am) EPA (1:00-3:00 pm)	10703 Stancliff Rd. 16025 Fallstone Rd.

Prior to each session, participants will receive detailed info regarding the meeting agenda, map quest directions, and other details necessary to fully participate.

Individual Benefits: Leadership FEB will provide you exposure to:

- How other agencies are managing priorities and resources under current fiscal constraints,
- How new and advanced technology is being leveraged for maximum benefits,
- Innovative techniques developed and efficiencies gained to respond to challenges in the federal sector, and
- A valuable leadership network, providing a number of individuals from which to draw information and solutions.
- Essential leadership competences from an excellent selection of books – reading and discussion

Agency Benefits: Leadership FEB provides opportunities for your employees to learn and grow through:

- A variety of best practices, providing the benefit of different perspectives,
- Exposure to advances in technology to increase productivity and/or operational efficiencies.
- Access to a valuable network of leaders and participants with a cumulative body of knowledge and expertise comprised from each individual's perspective,
- Eighty hours of unique and professional training provided over a period of eight months, the equivalent of two full-time work-weeks of training for a nominal fee of \$500,
- Exposure to a broad range of leadership challenges and how executives are leading their agencies through those challenges,
- Refining personal and inter-personal skills focusing on leadership and group dynamics. Participants complete this opportunity with a significantly increased network of federal leaders across Houston.

2018 Leadership FEB Class Registration

Return this portion to FEB



In order to maximize the benefits and expand the cohesive networking opportunities, no alternates will be authorized to attend single sessions. However, if an identified participant becomes unable to honor their commitment to the program, the employing agency is authorized to replace that individual for the duration of the program.

Participants **must attend a minimum of five sessions** in order to receive a certificate of completion for this program.

Forums may involve agencies with missions that require background investigations prior to the visit. If a registered employee has findings, their participation in that particular forum may be denied.

Due to limited availability, register as early as possible to reserve a slot for your participant. It is suggested that registrations be submitted no later than March 30, 2018. Cancellations will be processed at no charge to the agency through that date. After that, we ask the agency to honor their obligation due to cost incurred; however, a substitute participant is authorized and encouraged.

Tuition for the program is \$500. This covers *Leadership FEB* program expenses for each forum, leadership books, parking fees for designated forums, and other materials. Personal expenses, lodging, and mileage are not included in this cost. Tuition is payable by the individual, the employer, or the sponsoring organization. Tuition paid with the application will be held until the selection process is completed. Tuition will be refunded if the applicant is not selected. *Agency/Registrant may pay the course fee (\$500) by check, credit card, or government voucher*

Name: _____

Title: _____

Dept & Agency: _____

City: _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____

Participant's Signature *Date*

Agency Director/Commander Review/Approval *Date*

By Mail	By Email:	Questions, Call:
Federal Executive Board 2320 La Branch St., Rm 1107 Houston, TX 77004	Gerald.Poole@gsa.gov	713-425-2244



Registration for Houston FEB Meeting



****Medical Countermeasures Topic ****

This event is an interagency intergovernmental planning effort that includes the FEB Comprehensive Emergency Management Team, FEMA, and Oklahoma Emergency Management. This exercise is for government leaders (federal, state, local) to discuss issues necessary to provide effective planning to increase the safety of our workforce and an opportunity to share lessons learned and best practices. Your agency's participation in this exercise is very important. We ask that only a couple of organizational leaders attend from each organization. There will be no After Action Report generated through the tabletop, rather a "self-evaluation" for the participants that can serve as a foundation for reviewing, updating, and continuing to improve relevant policies, plans, and/or procedures that will continue to build your organization's readiness.

Date:	Wednesday, May 9, 2018
Time:	10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Location:	1919 Smith Street, Houston Bayou Meeting Room on 10 th Floor
Who Should Attend?	Agency Leaders, Emergency Coordinator and/or Facilities Manager

Agency: _____

Agency Leader (FEB Member) to attend: _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Address: _____

Emergency Coordinator, Facility Manager or Other to accompany Agency Leader:

Name Email Address

Functional Title Email Address

<i>Please email to:</i>	<i>Houston Federal Executive Board</i>
	<i>LeAnn.Jenkins@gsa.gov</i>

Please register no later than May 4, 2018.